

THE AMERICAN ROLE

came so strained that he was forced to leave Iran toward the end of 1944 with his work unfinished.

The reasons for the mission's lack of success were manifold. They belonged to psychological, political, and administrative spheres.

From the psychological viewpoint the mission faced basic difficulties.

First, an important gap existed between Iranian and American mentalities.

Secondly, the United States had no tradition of colonial administration and no experienced personnel available for such work. Both of these statements require some elucidation. With regard to their mentality, the Iranians undoubtedly did not possess the same love of duty, order, and efficiency as the Americans. Iranian ways are slow but filled with decorum. Their business standards are different.

What in the eyes of a Westerner is a bribe, in the eyes of an

Oriental may be just a gift and a sign of consideration. What in the eyes of an American is necessary promptness, in the eyes of an

Iranian may seem to be a mad and unjustified speed. Such differences

have to be understood by the personnel involved and require tact-

ful and delicate handling. Obviously the Americans were invited to

reorganize Iranian finances because of their acknowledged superiority as experts and representatives of Western efficiency, but

this did not mean that the Iranian officials were prepared to adopt

American standards and to abandon their own.

Sometimes a concession to the native spirit might have been more advantageous than an uncompromising attitude.

It is not certain whether, in their honest zeal to do good, all the American advisers were aware of this psychological problem.

Nor could they be entirely blamed for that, for after all

these advisers usually had had no past experience on which to base their tactics. Recruited hastily during wartime, and often suddenly catapulted from their purely American occupations in industry, insurance, trade, or government, these men did not have the advantages of the average British civil servant who goes to a distant post in the Empire. As a result, tension frequently developed between American executives and Iranian subordinates, both on higher and lower levels. Although Dr. Millspaugh himself had the advantage of former experience in Iran and elsewhere, some observers doubted whether even he understood the problem sufficiently. As one of the foreign observers of